

AN 1862

TRIP TO THE WEST

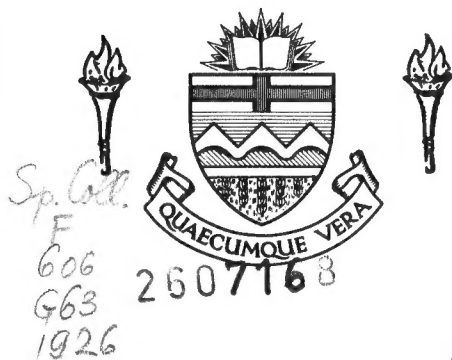
AN 1862 TRIP TO THE WEST - GOFF

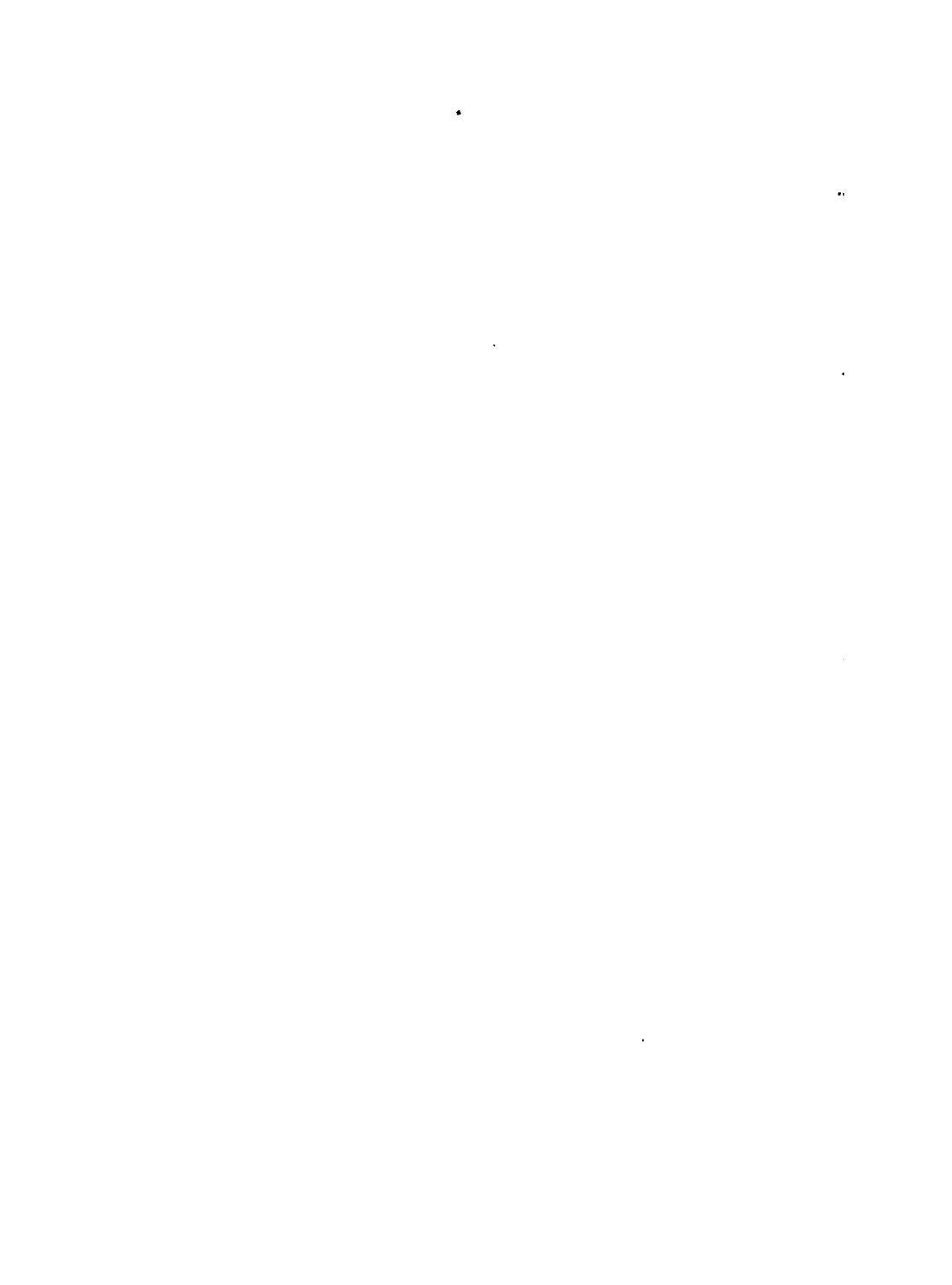
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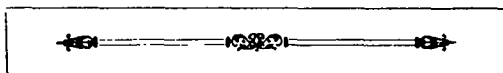
An 1862 Trip to the West.



Lyman Bullock Goff

Dedicated To
My Grandchildren
1926

**Pawtucket Boys' Club Press
Pawtucket Rhode Island**



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Prologue

I have often been requested by my friends, and especially my grandchildren, to give an account of a trip I took in 1862.

As I kept no diary at that time, I can now recall only those portions which were indelibly stamped upon my memory; the events of minor importance, and indeed the order of the important ones, for the most part, are gone beyond recall.

But, even after the lapse of so many years, as I read in the various periodicals articles written, some of them, years ago, and some of later date, and as I visit some of those old time spots, my mind is refreshed and there are placed before me, as if it were yesterday, events I had forgotten, events never to be seen again, for civilization has obliterated all trace of those early days. For it must be remembered that at the time about which I am now writing, there was not a bridge across the Mississippi River, from New

Orleans to St. Paul; there was not a railroad in the state of Minnesota; there was not a house west of the river, from Dakota to the Rocky Mountains. Buffalo by the hundreds of thousands roamed the prairies. Indians, in innumerable tribes, were the sole inhabitants, at war with each other, and the enemy of every white man.

The country over which I traveled, in Minnesota and the Dakotas, is now dotted all over with towns and cities—farming country well developed—farms with thousands of acres raising wheat, corn and the like—harvested with machinery of the most improved kind—a wonderful sight and well worth a visit in the time of harvest.

As Parkman, the historian, describes it, contrasting the then wild west with that of the present:

“For the Indian teepees, with their trophies of bow, lance shields, dangling

scalp locks, we have towns and cities, resorts of health and pleasure seekers, with an agreeable society, Paris fashions and the last new novel.

"The sons of civilization, drawn by the fascination of fresher and bolder life, thronged to the western wilds in multitudes, which blighted the charm that had allured them.

"The buffalo is gone, and of all his millions nothing is left but his bones. The cattle and fences of barbed wire have supplanted this vast and boundless grazing ground.

"Those discordant serenaders, the wolves, that howled at evening about the traveller's campfire, have succumbed and hushed their savage music.

"He, who feared neither bear, Indian nor devil, the all daring and the old enduring trapper, belongs to the past, and in his stead we have the cowboy, and even his star begins to wane. The wild west is tamed forever."

From St. Paul to the Red River there were a few settlements, and from that river to the British Possessions, the route I was to cover, there was not a house or hut of any kind, if I may except one house midway between Fort Abercrombie and Georgetown, a post occupied by a few soldiers, to prevent smuggling across the border.

All communication to this distant point was by the Red River Wagon, so called, a description of which I will give later.

Communication from Chicago to St. Paul was by rail to La Crosse, Wisconsin, and thence by steamer, the stern wheel boat, now out of date. The population of St. Paul was about seven thousand, and that of Minneapolis about three thousand. Today the population of St. Paul is about three hundred thousand, and Minneapolis about three hundred and fifty thousand.

Stage coaches carried passengers and



Fort Gary

freight only two days' run to the points north, and from that point the only means of transportation for passengers or freight was by the Red River Wagon.

When the state of the water in the river permitted, freight was carried down the river from the terminus of the stage line.

As one looks on the map of today he will see the name of Winnipeg, a city of 180,000 inhabitants, but in the days of which I write, there was no such place, only a small trading post called Fort Gary, in the British Possessions, and garrisoned by British soldiers, part of a company only.

The traveller of today in the luxurious equipment of the Canadian Pacific Railroad can hardly realize the then existing conditions.

From St. Paul due west and to the Red River, the first objective point of my trip, there were but a few small collections of houses, far apart, each, how-

ever, a nucleus of large and populous towns and cities in the years to come.

Communication with them was by stage coach with its four horses, the pick of the country, with fresh relays every twelve miles, the terminus being a two days' run, and after that, beyond, a wilderness.

I have gone over this trip, in my mind, many times, and I can even now recall the turns of the road, for there was but one; the lakes in which I fished and the ground over which I hunted the prairie chicken and ducks to supply the table; but on going over the same route by rail, I have failed to find a trace of the earlier days, the country being farmed in every direction and dotted with thriving towns and cities.

At this late date it would be utterly impossible to put on paper even an approximately accurate account, and I would not attempt it, only from the fact that many letters written and sent to my

friends at home, were kept by them and given to me on my return home. Some of these letters I shall quote entire, thinking that such might be of more interest, from the fact that they were written on the spot, at the time of the actual occurrence.

Several letters thus written were destroyed by the Indians who captured the mail coaches and massacred the passengers.

Many of the scenes I witnessed, such as the horrible atrocities committed by the Indians, were not fit reading for my young grandchildren, and I omitted all mention of that, but, if you have read the works of Cooper or Prof. Parkman, you are familiar with just such scenes as came under my observation.

This by way of preamble, just to let you know what kind of a country I was planning to travel over, and that you may the better see what a foolhardy trip I had planned; and as I look at it now,

more than ever I realize the madness of it.

Most of this account was written many years ago and with the exception of a few short descriptions I have made no changes, and at this writing in 1926 I can still recall many of these incidents, and often at night as my mind wanders upon some of these scenes I cannot help shuddering as I think for instance of young Wright, who with his rifle covered my retreat to the wagon when my mule had left me, and who was shot by my side, and when we crossed to the Fort his father, with eager eyes, was looking for him, and I had to tell him what had happened.

And to my dear grandchildren I dedicate this account.

Chapter I



T was in the Spring of 1862, in company with a sick friend and his family, I took the cars for La Crosse, the terminus of the railway. I well remember the day I left Pawtucket, for on that very day, a company of young men, who had banded themselves together as the Slater Drill Corps, of which I was a member, also left town, bound in the opposite direction, as participants of the Civil War.

For some time past I had been ailing, having contracted a severe cold. In common with others I had caught the army fever, and as I look back to those times I am convinced that the anxiety expressed by my parents about my health, which seemed to prompt them to send me West to regain it, was really a desire to keep me out of the army. However that may be, the cars took me safely to La Crosse, where we took the steamer for St. Paul.

We remained at the International Hotel for about a month, my time being taken up mostly in fishing, which in those days was excellent. We then removed our quarters to Minneapolis.

The friend, with whom I had journeyed from Pawtucket, grew worse, and one of his relatives came on to look after him, thus relieving me, and at this juncture, a party of four having been made up to take a trip to Fort Gary, in the British Possessions, I gladly accepted their invitation to join them.

Just before the day appointed for our departure I met with an accident, which kept me indoors for two weeks, when having nearly recovered, I determined to set out in search of them.

Of course I knew the route they had taken, and I knew about how many miles they could make in a day, and I knew that a two days' ride in a mail coach making seventy-five miles a day would soon overtake the party. A fourteen

hours' ride brought me to St. Cloud, and a sixteen hours' ride the next day found me somewhere up the Sauk Valley, near the Alexandria Woods and about one hundred seventy-five miles from St. Paul by stage coach.

The place where the stage put up for the night was laid out on the map as a town. Like many of the western towns of those days, all of the town or city that was in sight consisted of a log cabin and a shanty. The cabin was labelled "Hotel;" the shanty, "Store."

Not liking the prospect of remaining in such a hotel, even for one night, and learning that a party of four were camped a little further on, and having reason to believe that they were the party I was in search of, although it was late in the evening I determined to find them, if possible.

I arranged for my baggage to be brought on the next day and set out on foot, and in about an hour introduced

myself to the ones who were to be my companions for the Summer.

Of course it is proper to briefly describe the make-up of the party. One of the party was the son of a prominent business man of Boston. He was an invalid and had travelled nearly over the world in search of health, and as events proved, came to the West to die. I shall have very little to say about him, for he found he was not able to stand the trip, and he left us at Fort Abercrombie, to await our return.

Another was also an invalid, but able to do something, and the trip was of great benefit to him. I met him afterwards in Philadelphia, and later in St. Paul. He was an agreeable companion, but oh, so fond of talking about his girl friends.

Another was from Philadelphia, but he had to be excused from working because he had left a sweetheart at home and his time was all taken up in writing

letters to her. How many hours we sat and listened to his description of her charms. This kind of talk is first rate conversation for a month or so, but it grew rather monotonous before the summer was past. And we wished many a time that a stage would pass and relieve us of his presence, but we were not to be thus favored. Continual letter writing and the constant use of his tongue wagging on one subject made him tired, and it was not long before we ceased to expect anything from him.

I did not know it at the time, but I found out that all were born tired!

Well, you ask, who did all the work?

You may well ask such a question, for any camper knows that camping is not all play, for there is much hard work connected with camping, and moving camp daily.

Well, I didn't do much of it, for I was too fond of hunting. I supplied the table. Not a day, not a meal, but that we had

game. My time was taken up in roaming over the prairie, many a day without any dinner, returning at night, loaded with ducks, prairie chickens, wild pigeons, and occasionally with a nice string of fish.

Our man of all work was one Gervaise, a slim, wiry Frenchman, who with his two mules had been hired to do our work, and work he did, and everyone was willing to have him do it.

Well, as I said, I found my friends camped on the shores of Lake Osakis. They had a comfortable tent and a wagon load of provisions. As I had not communicated with them since they left St. Paul, they were surprised, as well as pleased to see me, and we spent the better part of the night in giving the news and what was going on in civilization.

Besides the mules there were three horses, one for each of the party, with the exception of the one who was too sick to ride. I procured one the next

morning, and although bought in a great hurry, proved to be a most excellent animal.

I had lots of news about the war, and of course I was pleased to hear of their experiences.

We learned that Gervaise was a nephew of Bottineau, a great hunter and an old Indian scout. He proved himself to be all he claimed. A more reckless, dare-devil sort of a man I never have met. He and I became great friends, and it was to him that I owe my love for hunting and fishing.

Right here is where I took my first drop of whiskey. Mosquitoes were so numerous that I rolled up in my blanket and slept on the shore of the lake, first taking one spoonful of whiskey, on the assertion of my companions that it would prevent my catching cold. As I did not catch cold that night, I took another drink the next day, and so on.

And here I may also say that for the

first time I took a smoke. I discovered on the edge of the lake, branches of willow trees from which the bark had been stripped, and I learned that the Indians, after stripping the bark, scraped the branch thoroughly, dried it and mixed it with tobacco, the mixture being known by the name of "kinnekinnick." Many years afterward there was a brand of tobacco put upon the market in this section of the country called "killkinnick," and from the appearance of it I judge it was about half wood.

We left the lake and pushed on for Breckenridge, which we had reason to believe was quite a town. Our sectional map showed it to be such, and on it we could pick out the names of streets and count many houses, and here and there were hotels. We made up our minds as to which was the principal street and decided at which hotel we would get a city meal. But alas for our hopes. On arriving at the spot we failed to find a trace

of the city. It was another instance of western enterprise. We ate and slept in our tent, about half a mile from the log hut and saw mill, the only buildings in the city.

During our trip from Osakis to Breckenridge, we were nearly eaten up by mosquitoes, and we travelled by day with netting around our heads and necks, and at night we were obliged to resort to the smudge hourly.

Our course, to this point, had been northwest, but upon reaching Breckenridge, which was situated, or supposed to be situated, on the bank of the Red River of the North, our route was due north. The river at this point was but a few feet across, as it was but a few miles from the headwaters, a small marshy lake or pond. Two small ponds lying about a half a mile apart are the headwaters, the one of the Red River which flows into Lake Winnipeg, and thence to Hudson Bay; the other into

Minnesota River, and thence into the Mississippi and on to the Gulf of Mexico. From the rising ground between the two ponds one could look upon these waters thus flowing to the opposite sections of the country.

A few miles brought us to Bentley's Crossing, the head of navigation. During the wet season, when there was water enough to float a flat boat, the traders hauled their wares to this point in wagons, and then transferred them to the boat for a longer or shorter journey, seven hundred miles to the British Possessions.

I had the pleasure of seeing one of these boats, equipped with a large windlass and a half a mile or more of strong rope. This was the propelling power over the shoals, for the occasions were many when the long rope was fastened to a tree on the shore, and by the application of man power to the windlass, the boat was hauled over the shoals.

The teams used by the traders in these early days were rude specimens and peculiar to that country. They were all alike, and similar to the tip cart in use with us, with this difference; there was not a particle of iron in its construction, and the body was made fast to the shafts, that is, the body did not tip independent of the shafts. When tipped up with the end of the body resting on the ground, the shafts pointed toward the skies. Neither was there any iron about the harness. There were no buckles or metal bits. Everything about the wagon and harness was made of wood and buffalo hide.

For animals, anything that came handy—horses, oxen, cows and dogs.

These carts, on good roads, can carry about seven hundred pounds.

When the water was very low, the entire trip from St. Paul to Winnipeg was made with these carts, the drivers and the horses walking the entire way, a

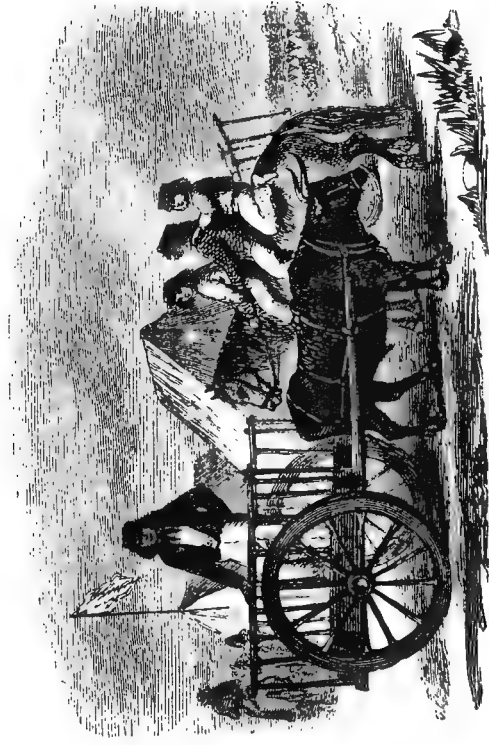
long and tedious journey.

A day's journey brought us to Fort Abercrombie, lying on the west bank of the river.

We remained in this vicinity several days, making some pleasant acquaintances with the officers of the Fort, which, by the way, was a Fort only in name, and I will describe it later, for later on we were destined to pass many never-to-be-forgotten days in this Fort. Here we left one of our party, as he did not feel able to continue with us.

A fifty mile drive brought us to Georgetown, a small trading post on the river, and the last post, and in fact the last hut of any description we were to see until we reached Selkirk, which was about forty miles from the boundary line.

/ Here we fell in with Viscount, afterward Lord Milton, and his Squire, Dr. Cheadles. They were intending to make the trip to Fort Gary in a canoe, in the



Red River Cart

British Possessions, and to go thence across the country to California. They invited us to go along with them to Fort Gary.

The account of the trip was afterward published by Cheadles, and I had the pleasure of reading it in England several years ago. Extracts from it were published in Harper's Monthly, some years after the trip was made, and if the rest of the book is as full of inconsistencies as some portions which came under my observation, there was not much in it that can be relied upon.

The Doctor was a gentleman, but the Viscount was a snob of the first water, and the book was evidently published to obtain a reputation for Milton which he could get in no other way.

Before we had been in his company half an hour he had informed us as to who the important personages were, their whole history, their income, and so forth.

But one cannot always pick his companions, and as they were going down the river in a dug-out, and as we wanted to make the trip, and did not care to make it alone, two of us purchased a dug-out and accepted their invitation to go along with them.

Rumors of Indians, however, changed our minds.

A party of traders coming along the next day seemed to us to be a safer escort than the party of two, and we left Milton to paddle his own canoe, while we went overland.

A short extract from Harper's may be of interest. It said:

"Two young men, acquainted with all the mysteries of the woods, experienced in woodcraft and inured to all hardships, set out for a canoe trip to Fort Gary, some five hundred miles distant. On their way they encountered a severe storm, their canoe was upset, and they nearly lost all their provisions and ammu-

nition; narrowly escaped being massacred by the Sioux, and were finally picked up by a passing steamboat and taken to Fort Gary."

This sounds very good and has probably been accepted by the readers as the truth. It certainly has never to my knowledge been contradicted. The plain unvarnished facts are, that they set out on the same day that we left Georgetown, on as beautiful a summer day as I ever saw. They had gone but a short distance from the settlement, when in rounding a sharp bend in the river, through sheer ignorance, not knowing how to manage so novel a craft, they upset. They lost none of their ammunition or provisions, and as the water was only about two feet deep, they waded to the shore, built a fire and had not thoroughly dried their clothing, when a scow overtook them and took them aboard.

Chagrin prevented their returning to the settlement, and they completed their

journey in the boat. I learned these facts from some of the crew, on my arrival at Selkirk, some weeks later. Their escape from being massacred by the Sioux, was narrow to this extent—they were about three months in advance of any Sioux.

Chapter II



GEORGETOWN was nothing but a small trading post situated upon the banks of the Red River and about fifty miles from Fort Abercrombie. About midway between these two points, a farmer had settled with his family. There was not another hut or house between these points, and not even a log cabin from this point to St. Vincent, 500 miles distant.

We left Georgetown with a party of about twenty in addition to our own number. The twenty were all half-breeds and Frenchmen, taking in their carts provisions and commodities for sale in the settlements.

For days and days we traveled over the smooth level prairie, with not even a bush to obstruct the view for miles and miles. Game was plenty and the monotony of the trip was only broken by an occasional chase of a wolf, which usually ended in the escape of the animal, and a

tumble on the prairie, owing to our ponies sliding into a badger hole or miring in an ant hill. Prairie dogs were there in abundance and it was an amusing sight to see them in hundreds perched on their mounds. A rifle shot would cause them to disappear like a flash.

But the nights generally brought excitement enough. There was a stampede of nearly all our horses one night, for what reason we never knew. But they were found after a short search, and, as we thought, securely fastened. A few moments after, one of the carts which had been disabled and had halted for repairs, came in, and the driver reported having seen an Indian on a knoll a short distance off. Although there was nothing to indicate that he was other than friendly, still, as we had never heard of an honest Indian, we were naturally inclined to be on the look-out for our animals. But before we had time to look after them there was a stamping and run-

ning, and away were our horses again. We did not get them back so easily this time. This time we fastened them for keeps and lay down with several of the party on guard. Toward morning we were all aroused by the report of a rifle. An Indian had been discovered creeping toward our horses, and was of course fired upon. This ended the excitement for that night.

As I have hinted, some of our carts had been obliged to halt for repairs. Not making their appearance in the morning, we were alarmed for their safety, especially after the skirmish of the evening before, and thus some of us went back in search of them. We found them several miles back encamped on a small lake, quietly eating breakfast. A ride of some twenty miles brought us up to the remainder of the party about noon. After dinner we made about fourteen miles, which I make mention of to show the distance my pony had gone during the

day. You will notice that two of us who went back to find the missing teams retraced about twenty miles of the route.

And right here comes the biggest story of the whole trip, and one which I have dared to repeat only a few times, and then only to parties who would accept my word about the same as they would the Law and Gospel. But the story is this, and I take it from a letter written home from the place of occurrence.

I quote: "As we were going along in the afternoon we observed a shower coming up. We all got into the covered wagons, tying our ponies behind. And it did rain. I have seen it rain before, but never harder than it did that day. It came through our covering and wet us to the skin. There also was a little hail. Just think of it hailing in July, and only fifteen minutes before we were nearly melting. As we went on the hail became thicker and thicker, but shortly the sun

came out and again we were nearly melted with the heat. As we went on, the ground gave evidence of there having been a terrible storm. The ground was white with hail stones, so thick were they that a sleigh could have been used. About half an hour after the sun came out, we came upon some of the largest hail stones that I ever saw, and of course we measured them and found some of them to measure seven inches in circumference. I had heard of hail stones as large as eggs, but I never saw any such until yesterday. I measured one that was seven inches around, but it seems to me that I saw some larger, as large even as my fist. It was fortunate that we were not further along during the storm, as we should have lost our ponies if not our lives, for the hail was not like such as we have at home, but it was like ice, hard and clear. We have a large ten gallon jug for a water jug, and we broke up the lumps and filled it."

Now this is rather a large story, but when in Philadelphia some years ago, I met one of the party, and as I knew he kept a diary of this trip, I asked him if he would turn to July, 1862, and read. I found that he had entered in his diary of date July 15, 1862, the very same account.

We soon passed the limit of the storm, and came upon burnt prairie abounding in pigeons, in the hunting of which I lost my way and did not regain my comrades until 9:30, and of course found them very much worried at my absence.

But we went on toward the north. The character of the country began to change. Here and there on the right and east we began to see trees, and we seemed to be going up hill. I will not weary you with the description of the country between Georgetown and Selkirk.

In a few days more there was a thick forest on our right and away off toward

the west we could see a low ridge of hills. And then the trees seemed to come toward us, and soon we were going through them. Suddenly we found ourselves on a high hill, and hundreds of feet below us lay the little settlement of Selkirk. Looking East we could see the crooked river Pembina, or rather could trace its zigzag course through the thick woods. North of the river the country was dead level as far as the eye could reach. Our course was down a steep hill, and down we went, and soon we were the observed of all the inhabitants, some of whom had heard nothing from the war for many months.

The population of Selkirk was about 1500, but we found that the larger portion was off on the hunt. The population was all sorts. The Americans were the tradesmen.

Pembina is an ancient settlement, one of the first trading posts established in this region. The friendly Indians still

haunt the place. There is a United States Military Post on the western bank of the Red River, and a village of a few hundred inhabitants about a half a mile away. Pembina has but a small chance of growing to any great size, for there are five towns laid out here within a circle of so many miles.

St. Vincent in Minnesota has already overtopped their older neighbors. Everything depends upon the line of travel; and now the great highway on the western bank of the river, which was once the only connection with Lord Selkirk's settlement and the civilized world, has been superseded by the railway.

The Pembina River ran in an easterly direction, dividing the forest from the prairie.

Westward lay the rolling prairie with no break to the Rocky Mountains. At our feet lay the settlement of Selkirk, and our train, making its way down the steep mountain, was soon camped within the

town limits. The larger part of the populations of Fort Gary, Pembina and Selkirk were away somewhere on the western prairie hunting buffalo for the winter supply of meat.

We remained in Selkirk several days, getting acquainted with the citizens, who were of all sorts; Americans, who were the traders; full blooded Chipeway Indians, friendly to the whites; half breeds, quarter breeds and breeds of all sorts, owing to the intermarrying of the Indians with the French and Americans.

A ball was given in our honor during our stay in the village.

On our trip from Georgetown to this settlement we had a party of twenty-five traders and their assistants, three of whom I will mention—Jack, the cook, one of the ugliest men I ever saw, but as good and faithful as he was ugly looking; Baptiste and Stoney, half breeds.

One day while in Selkirk, Jack came in and informed us that Baptiste and

Stoney had some squaws with the hunting party, to which I have alluded, and that if we wished to see the country, and do a little buffalo hunting, here was a grand opportunity.

As the Indians were going to start the next day on a tramp of over five hundred miles to find them, there was little time to make preparations. I jumped at the chance, and as I could not prevail upon my companions to go along, I promised Jack to be one of the party if he would also go along. And so the next morning we set out on what now looked to be a most foolhardy undertaking. A trip of perhaps more than five hundred miles and back, over a trackless prairie, with no tent, and only one horse of any value, with only the clothes I was wearing, with one blanket and with two half breeds, who could not speak a word of English. It is not necessary to go into details, but anyone can see at a glance the foolishness of setting out on such a

trip. But I was young, full of life, weighing 170 pounds, every muscle in my body like iron, from my roughing it on the up trip, and besides I was somewhat nettled at the refusal of my companions to join me. My outfit was simple in the extreme. Of course I took my horse, which by this time I had found to be an extra good one, saddle, bridle, and long lariat, and one double army blanket. My clothing consisted of the underclothing I was wearing, with no extra, a small Scotch cap, a pair of light trousers, one coat, and moccasins, which I wore without stockings.

For arms I had a shot gun, a Colt's navy revolver, a bowie knife, and well provided with powder, shot and caps, for this was before the day of the magazine gun.

For provisions we had dried buffalo meat, which one could chew for hours, a few crackers and plenty of tea.

Our cooking apparatus was a tin pail

in which to boil the tea. No sugar, salt or pepper.

The Indians eat no vegetables when on their hunt, relying wholly on meat from the buffalo, which they eat without the aid of plates or forks.

Comment: 1926.

I did not know until I reached Selkirk that I had been journeying from Georgetown with persons who in these last days are called "bootleggers." The traders had several of their carts loaded with whiskey and alcohol, the mixture of one barrel of whiskey with three barrels of alcohol making a compound of what the Indians termed "firewater." As it was against the law to sell liquor of any kind to the Indians, before we arrived at Selkirk this compound was buried at some distance from the line of travel, to be taken out as wanted.

Chapter III



BIDDING my friends good bye,
I departed, intending to pick
them up at Fort Abercrombie
on our way back.

As the half breeds could speak no English, I was obliged to pick up my French, but Jack, besides being a man of all trades, was familiar with all the dialects of the various tribes of Indians. I was the only mounted one of the party, but I found the balance of the party to be good walkers.

Our little baggage was packed in a wagon drawn by a medium sized pony, which looked as though he would last about a day. As it turned out, he drew the load about a week, and then my animal was substituted, I then being obliged to tramp with the rest, until we decided to throw away the wagon in order to make better time. The cart was like thousands I was to see later, now obsolete, but at the time was the only kind in general use.

An account of my trip from this point I have in the shape of a letter which I wrote to my brother at home, as follows:

“St. Vincent.

“I intended to write to you some weeks ago, when I arrived here, but something prevented.

“I arrived here Saturday, July 20th, and intended to write you then, as I had intended to stay here about two weeks, but getting an opportunity to go on a buffalo hunt I started off without writing you, but asking another party to whom I had finished a letter, to give you the substance of that.

“On Tuesday, July 29th, in company with two half breeds and a Frenchman, as interpreter, I left St. Joseph for the Plains. I was the only one on horseback, the others intending to get horses as soon as we reached the camp.

“About two thousand half breeds with their families left St. Joseph, Pembina and other settlements in June on a sum-

mer hunt. These people live by hunting, going out in the summer and returning in August, starting out again in September and returning in October. We were going out to meet this camp, hoping to come across their trail and follow it until we came up with them. The half breeds with me had families in the camp.

“As my pony was a buffalo hunter, I was anxious to go. Our baggage was packed in a wagon peculiar to the country and a description of which I have given elsewhere.

“We left about one o'clock.

“Our provisions consisted of some dried buffalo meat, a few crackers, and lots of tea. We travelled until about six and then encamped by the side of a little creek. The first part of the way was through the St. Joseph woods which separated the small level prairie from the great rolling one extending westward to the Rocky Mountains. The prairie which we had travelled over on our way

to St. Joseph was, for the most part, perfectly level and we could see miles ahead. But this prairie on which we had started out seems to be made up of large basins, and when we were on the top of a high hill we seemed to be on the rim of a large basin, three or four miles away, and when we reached the next ridge we were but on the edge of another basin. Sometimes this basin is fifteen or twenty miles away and sometimes but a mile or two.

"But, as I was saying, we camped and took supper about six, and then travelled on about two hours, and fastening our horse, laid down to sleep. Our bed was a buffalo robe laid on the ground and our covering was a single blanket.

"Early in the morning we were on our way, stopping about nine for breakfast of dried buffalo meat, crackers and tea.

"About two o'clock on a distant hill we espied a buffalo. Although I was assured when I bought my pony that he was a buffalo hunter, I had only the

word of the owner, and he was in civilization. But here was the opportunity to test him, and soon, with one of the half breeds on his back, he was on his way to make good, and it was but a short time before we were all seated before a fire waiting for the cooking of the buffalo meat. The pony proved to be an excellent runner, and in addition to his speed, to be long winded. Here for the first time I tasted buffalo meat, and although pepper and salt were wanting, I declare I never ate better meat.

"We went no further that day but ate and ate all the afternoon. At night it rained, and of course we were wet to the skin. And it rained until the next noon, when it cleared off and we espied a camp, hoping it was the one we were looking for, but we found that the main camp was miles away, in which were the families of the half breeds with us.

"The brigade had divided several days before, the larger part going to the south

and a band of some three hundred carts returning towards home.

"I was much amused at the camp. We reached it at dusk and the ring was formed for the night. For fear of Indians, the carts are placed so as to form a ring and the animals are placed inside. The men and women sleep outside in tents and lodges. Besides the half breeds there were some fifty warriors of the Chippeaway tribe, encamped with their families.

"In the evening an Indian came in stating that he had come from the other camp and gave the direction in which we they were travelling. As our half breeds wished to see their families, early in the morning we started off, striking a due south course. We were accompanied a short distance by two hunters from the camp, who were looking for buffalo. One of the half breeds took my pony and we did not see him until noon. He had killed two buffaloes, and had seen two Sioux. In consequence of this we hur-

ried on and camped at night on the shores of a small lake called Heron—and it was rightly named. Up to this point the way was dotted with lakes filled with ducks, geese, cranes, herons and snipes.

“The half breeds being frightened at the report of Sioux, wished to hurry on. We pushed on until about eleven, and about two were on our way again, for we knew that the Sioux could not follow us in the night time. The half breeds said we should reach the camp by noon, but noon came and no camp. Our cart horses gave out here and mine was substituted.

“We arrived at the place called Medicine Lodge at night. There was no trail so that the brigade could not have passed, and it was decided to go to the place where the Indians had left them and follow up their trail. We had expected to head them off or else strike their trail.

“On account of the mosquitoes being

so thick, we left Medicine Lodge and camped about two miles off on the prairie. This place had its name from being where the Indians used to meet for conference, and it was a favorable spot on account of it being the only place for many miles around where there were trees.

"It rained in the night, and on awakening we found that a herd of buffalo was in the vicinity, and not wishing to disturb them, although we had but little meat, and as there was no water in the vicinity, we decided to push on.

"But still we saw no camp, and we had no breakfast, and there was no water for our horse or ourselves.

"We travelled that day about seventy-five miles without water either for ourselves or our horse.

"About noon, as we were on a very high hill, we saw miles away something which looked like a clump of bushes. The half breeds declared that there were

no trees in that locality and that it must be the camp or else an encampment of Indians, perhaps hostile.

"But we hastened on to the Cheyenne River, arriving there at nightfall.

"We hardly knew what to do. One of the half breeds went to the ford and could find no trace of the brigade having been there and we had no means of knowing in what direction the brigade was travelling. However, in the morning Jack, the Frenchman, was sent, as a last resort, on my horse to discover what was the object we saw.

"We waited at the crossing about three hours when we saw, on the mountain opposite, seven men on horseback and three spare horses coming toward us. Fearing they might be Sioux, we got our guns in readiness, but soon we heard the familiar whoop of Jack. He had found the camp and some of his friends had accompanied him back with spare horses. To hungry men this was a wel-

come sight, and on our arrival at the camp we astonished everyone with our eating.

"This camp was a much larger one than the one of which I have before made mention. There were about twelve hundred carts. Each hunter had a horse and some several spare ones. Some men had one cart and some had more. The half breeds with us had eight horses and five oxen. There were about two hundred full blooded Chippeway Indians, so that there were in the encampment nearly five thousand persons.

"We stood on the hill some time looking upon the, to me, unfamiliar spectacle, a camp in which were nearly five thousand people, men, women, children, horses, carts and the Red River cart, formed in a circle, perhaps two thousand of them, the beasts of burden tethered inside the enclosure, and away on the prairie some fifteen hundred half breeds and Indians charging thousands of buffa-

loes, many of the squaws following with carts, cutting up the slain, every portion of which was utilized for some purpose. From our elevation we could get a fine view of this exciting scene. The sun was about setting and the sight was one never to be forgotten, and I did not then realize that soon there would be no more buffalo, and that those vast fields within a few years would be peopled and become the best farming land of this country.

“There were about fifteen hundred dogs, wolf dogs, which are used in the winter in a train, three to a sled. And they were of the howling breed. At night about eight they began to howl. They howl again at nine, and again at ten, then they hush up for the rest of the night.

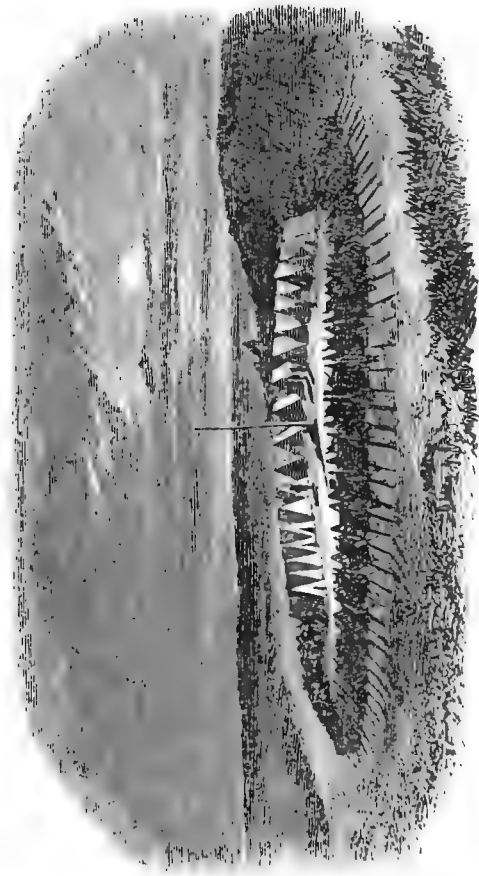
“Here is a chance for you to indulge in imagination. The train when moving is about one and one half miles in length, with five rows of carts, making about

seven or eight miles of carts. All the horsemen of course are mounted, and two or three hundred horses and oxen are following, ditto the dogs.

“But soon the day was spent, the hunt ended, and all were on their way to the camp, where supper had already been prepared for them, and we were on our way down the hill, I the only white man, the observed of all observers.

“I was made acquainted with Wilkes, the commander of the brigade, and invited to sit and smoke with the leaders and some Chippeway chiefs. The smoke preceded a talk. I had told Jack that I was from New England, and naturally he thought that I was from Old England, and he informed them that I was not there to talk about treaties, but that I was a Lord from England, visiting that part of the country to join with them in buffalo hunting.

“The day after I arrived a consulta-



A small encampment showing arrangement of
a night camp similar to the one I visited later.

tion was held, whether to proceed in search of more buffalo or return home. Many wished to return home on account of a treaty, others wished to go on. The Indians were those who wished to return, but they were finally persuaded to go on for a few days longer. But soon runners came in and said that buffalo were in sight.

"Camp was at once formed, the horsemen going to the front, followed by the empty wagons, and soon the hunters were in the midst of the herd, slaughtering the animals right and left by the hundreds. Naturally I wished to join the party as my pony was tried and proven a good hunter.

After we had gone about five miles the horsemen came galloping back, saying they wished the carts to go back as there were Sioux ahead. So back the carts went pell mell. I never saw such a frightened set of men and women. One cart remained behind, into which

I got, leaving my cart to go back with the crowd.

"All we could see that looked like a band of Sioux was a large dark object far off in the distance, and after waiting some time, a part of the horsemen went out to see what they could discover, and in about half an hour we saw them running buffalo. What they thought was a band of Sioux turned out to be a large band of buffalo.

"However, they did see Sioux, so six half breeds went out to treat with them. They talked and smoked with them, when suddenly some Chippeway Indians crept up and rushed for them, but the half breeds kept them back. The Sioux in the meantime ran off. The half breeds again approached them and traded horses.

"The Sioux said they had a large camp over the hill and that there were fifteen hundred warriors and about eleven hundred lodges. They said that

inasmuch as the Chippeways had endeavored to kill a part of their tribe, they should come the next day to our camp and if the Chippeways fired a gun they should attack our camp. Consequently the Indians prepared for a fight. They had a War Dance which lasted the better part of the night. I visited their camp about midnight and I shall never forget the sight.

"All the next day we waited in camp for the expected Sioux, but they came not, and in the afternoon the half breeds visited their camp, traded horses with them, and learned that they were not anxious for a skirmish with such a force as we could muster.

"The scare being over, two days after we started, part for the settlement and part to continue the hunting.

"We saw plenty of buffalo, but did not disturb them, as we had plenty of meat. However, I amused myself one day in running one down. I soon caught

up with the bull, but suddenly he turned and commenced to hunt me. I have come to the conclusion that buffalo hunting is rather risky business. I have been pitched over the head of my horse twice when on a full gallop in consequence of his stepping in a badger hole and tumbling over. Once he turned a complete somersault and came near falling on me. He just grazed me as I rolled away from him, and it was the roll that saved me.

"On rainy days, wet to the skin, day and night, lying down in the rain and riding all day in the rain with no rubber clothing—well I guess I am getting tough all right."

Another extract from same letter.

"But I am back in St. Joseph once more sound and well. We shall start for home in a day or two, for my comrades remained here waiting for me. I shall sell my horse here as he is quite tired. If I was to stay here, I could sell

him for \$125 or perhaps \$150, so people say, so you see mine is a very good animal. I have had lots of chances to trade.

"I hope to be in St. Paul in about a month, when I hope to get letters from home, and when I get to St. Paul I shall want some money.

"If things are squally, as we hear they are, I shall wish to join the Navy on my return.

"I saw the brother of Gideon Wells when at Minneapolis and got well acquainted with him. I was speaking to him about wishing to join the Navy and he said if I wished a position as Assistant Paymaster I could get it. We hear that the South is whipping the North most dreadfully.

"You will probably not hear from me again until I reach St. Paul. In this country the mails leave about once a month."

Chapter IV



HUNTING buffalo is no boy's play. It is dangerous, but very exciting sport. The buffalo is not a fast runner, but one of the all day kind. As soon as the horsemen were within a mile or more of the herd, approaching the herd so that they were not scented, they approached with caution until within half a mile or so. Then they rushed toward the animals, who had already sighted their enemies, at full speed. Pushing them at full speed they were soon wearied, and they fall into their slow steady gallop which they can keep up for miles. Singling out an animal they run alongside and as they arrive abreast, discharge their guns or arrows into the side of the beast. Without waiting to see the effect of the shot the hunters are soon alongside another, and this is kept up until the horse is too tired to renew the attack. The experienced hunter, with a good horse, has been known to kill seven buffaloes before his horse

is blown. This is all accomplished by dexterity in loading. The hunters are armed with shot guns. The powder is carried in a horn suspended from the neck. The caps are stuck on a piece of leather, also suspended from the neck. Spare bullets are carried in a pouch buckled to the waist. Those intended for immediate use are carried in the mouth. They use no wads. When running at full speed, the gun is carried in the right hand, resting on the thigh, in which position it remains until alongside the buffalo, when the muzzle is lowered and the gun discharged before the bullet has time to run down. Almost instantly the gun is brought to the upright position, the powder, without being measured, allowed to run into the barrel, and while the powder is running down, a bullet is dropped from the mouth, a cap almost instantly inserted, and the rider is ready for another shot, and by this time he is alongside another buffalo, for these ponies follow the buf-



Hunting Buffalo

faloes as a dog would a hare, and they are seldom guided.

The men are the hunters. The squaws follow with the wagons. They skin the animals, cut up the meat and spread it out for drying, as it is their winter food. While this is going on, the hunt being ended for the day, the men look on and smoke.

I remained in this camp some three weeks, living on buffalo meat, sleeping in a tent with half a dozen or more, running races with the young Indians and practicing throwing the tomahawk.

It was a wild life, but I enjoyed every minute of it, and having had my fill, with Jack and the two half breeds, we started for civilization.

Chapter V



WHEN the carts are halted for the night they are arranged in the form of a circle, with the shafts projecting outwards; and within this wooden cordon are pitched at one end, the tents, and the animals are tethered at the other extremity.

Pembina buggies, these carts are called, and a wooden cart on two wheels is the simplest description of them.

These carts on good roads can carry about 700 pounds.

With as many carts as he can afford, and at least one fast buffalo horse, with gun and a full powder horn and shot pouch, the hunter is prepared to go to the plains; but not alone. He and his neighbors make up a brigade. Large or small, it is called a brigade. And the brigade is a travelling town, men, women, horses, oxen, dogs, carts, tents, lodges, frying pans and all other house-

keeping utensils that are portable, traveling together.

"A large camp of half breeds on their way to the plains is a sight to be seen. Their dress is picturesque. Men and women wear moccasins, marked with gaudy beads. The men's trousers are generally of corduroy and Canada blue, and their coats are of the Canadian pattern, with large brass buttons and a hood hinging between the shoulders. A jaunty cap surmounts the head, often of blue cloth but sometimes of an otter or badger skin, and whether with or without the coat, a grey sash is always worn around the waist, the bright tassels hanging down the left hip.

"Women, boys and the supernumeraries of the brigade drive the carts, each taking care of two or three.

"The hunters are mounted on fine horses, the buffalo runners, and they keep a considerable distance in advance of the train on the lookout for buffalo or

hostile Indians.

“The drudgery of the camp is performed by the women.”

When the train is in motion every separate wheel on each cart has its peculiar squeak. At camp these are silent, but Babel is continued by all voices, by the barking of the dogs and the lowing of the oxen. But in the midst of it all the work is going on, fires lighted, water is boiling, and the pemican frying, and soon supper is ready and after that the pipe.

Chapter VI



NE of the principal sources of subsistence of the frontier people in their long journeys, and in fact for winter use, is what is known as Pemican. It is especially adapted to the very cold countries, where in the winter it was sometimes impossible to make fires to cook with, and the means of transportation was by dog train. It was invented by the Hudson Bay people many years before the time of which I am writing, and undoubtedly from necessity. It was made in this way: The meat of the buffalo, without the fat, was thoroughly boiled, and then picked into shreds of very small pieces. A sack was made of buffalo skin, with the hair on the outside, which would hold about ninety pounds of meat. A hole was then dug in the ground, of sufficient size to hold the sack. It was filled with the meat thus prepared, which was packed and pounded until it was made as hard as it could be made. A kettle of boiling buffalo fat, in a fluid

state, was then poured into it, until it was thoroughly permeated, every space from center to circumference being filled, until it became a solid mass, perfectly impervious to the air, and as well preserved against decomposition as if it had been enclosed in a sealed glass jar. This was a nutritious preparation of animal food, ready for use, both for man and for dog. And it was nutritious and palatable, for I have chewed it for hours.

Naturally one would ask, "In this treeless country, what do they do for fuel when the large body of hunters are on their trips." Well, there were hundreds of thousands of buffaloes and other animals roaming over the plains, and their droppings, which are termed "buffalo chips," when dried make excellent fuel, and there was always a plentiful supply of it.

Chapter VII



OW it may be interesting to hear an account of a description by Dr. George Bird Grinnell, who went West long before the time of which I have been writing, for he speaks of the Indians hunting with the bow and arrow, whereas at the time I write, about all the Indians had guns.

He writes: "Then the Plains were uninhabited except by Indians. It was long before the days of the cattle and the cowboy. Many of the Indians were hostile and the party early learned to be prepared for an attack, which was quite certain never to take place at the time when it was expected. A man's rifle was his constant companion and he was safe only when constantly on the watch for signs of Indians. But there were friendly Indians too."

One summer Dr. Grinnell hunted with four thousand Pawnees, who were looking for buffalo to get their winter supply

of meat. Day after day the long train of women, children and old men moved over the prairie from camp to camp, while the active men were out picking up straggling buffalo, elk, deer, turkeys or other game.

When the far travelling scouts, sent out to find buffalo, brought in word that a herd large enough for a surround had been seen, all got ready for the chase. The best buffalo horses were caught, the women sharpened the knives, and the people were in a state of subdued excitement. The camp moved up near to the herd and when the men went up to surround the buffalo, the women followed with the pack horses to bring in the meat.

One who has ridden in a buffalo hunt with a company of seven or eight hundred naked men, mounted on naked horses, will never forget that ride.

To the left and right along the broad front he saw the lines of heads of horses

rhythmically lifting in their strides the smooth brown bodies of the riders, sometimes touched by the sun, and their long hair streaming out behind and rising and falling with the motion of the horses.

When the swift moving line had passed over the last ridge and come so near to the buffalo that these turned to run, the signal for the charge was given and each man was free to do his best.

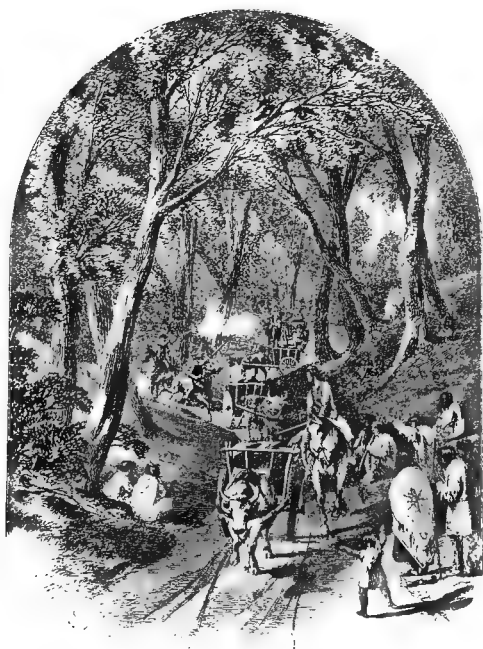
Then came the helter skelter race through clouds of dust kicked up by many animals. Buffalo and Indians were on every side, and through the haze, one and another dark rider was seen to push up close to the side of a fat cow, lean over and pierce her with an arrow that sank to the feather, and then turn off toward another victim. Not a shot was heard, for no Indian had a gun.

That day four hundred buffaloes were slain, but the men and women who cut up and loaded these on the horses saved everything—meat, skins, marrow-bones,

and intestines—for all the buffalo yielded was used.

Since that date the rifle and shot gun have taken the place of bow and arrow. I give this description because it tallies with many just such buffalo hunts which I witnessed, and in some of which I was a participant.

Chapter VIII



Returning From a Buffalo Hunt



YOU may be interested to know what disposition is made of the various parts of the buffalo. The hide is used by the Indians for clothing, coverings for their wigwams for the winter, and when the hide is from the buffaloes killed late in the year, when the skin is prime, that is with the hair thick, it is marketed for what is known, or what used to be known, as the buffalo robe, so common many years ago, but now obsolete. The meat for winter use is made into Pemmican.

Early in the morning, after the hunt is over, the tents and lodges are struck by the women, the oxen harnessed to the carts, and horses saddled by the men. The horn sounds and the carts fall into line, the hunters mount and the train is in motion.

After about two hours of brisk travel the train halts for an hour and a half for breakfast, and then pushes on again un-

til the order is given to halt for dinner.

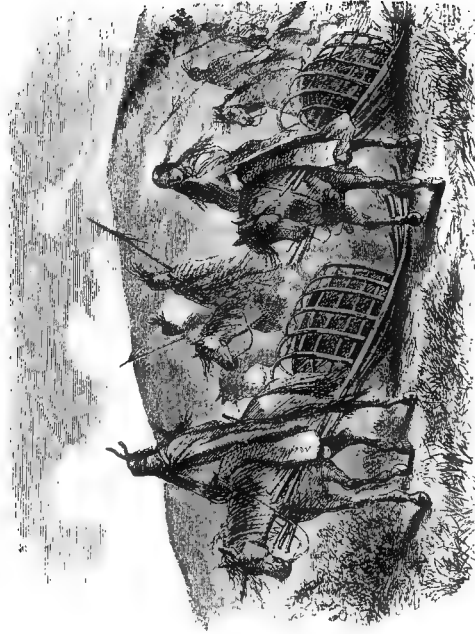
The horsemen in the meantime are scouring the plains, on the lookout for buffalo. As soon as buffalo are sighted, the camp is formed by the women. The oxen are harnessed to the carts prepared to follow the hunters and to bring back to camp the slain buffalo.

The squaws take down the lodges and the march begins over the prairie, dreary and brown with the withering touch of Autumn and the heat. The spectacle was one such as some now alive have seen in these Western lands, but which will never be seen again. The tribes had abundance of horses, the best of which were used for the running of buffalo and hunting, the remainder for carrying burdens. The last were equipped in a peculiar manner. Several of the long tent poles used in forming the camp tents, were secured to each side of the so-called saddle, and trailed behind to the ground. A few slats of wood lashed to each side

kept the poles apart, and on the slats were spread buffalo skins, forming a receptacle for any baggage, spare meat, and perhaps a wicker basket for the babies. In fact all the spare baggage connected with the camp outfit was carried in this manner. The wagons were loaded with the meat, to be dried for the winter's use. Many of the innumerable dogs were equipped in this manner, with shorter poles and lighter loads.

Bands of naked boys, noisy and dirty, roamed the prairie, practicing with their bows and arrows on any small animal they might see. Gay young squaws, adorned on each cheek with a spot of ochre or red clay, and arrayed in tunics of fringed buckskin, embroidered with porcupine quills, were mounted on ponies, astride like the men; while lean and tattooed hags, the drudges of the tribes, hideous and unkempt, scolded the lagging horses, or shrieked at the disorderly boys and dogs, with voices like the yell of an owl.

Most of the warriors were on horseback, armed with white shields of bull's hide, feathered lances, war clubs and guns. A wild, picturesque and interesting sight this, the breaking up of the camp and starting for another buffalo hunt, kept up until enough meat had been obtained to carry them until the next hunt for the winter.



Indian Village on the Move

Chapter IX



HIS trip was a wonderfully interesting one to me, one that will never be seen by anyone again, for civilization has obliterated every trace of it.

I attended many of the buffalo hunts, as a spectator for the most part, for as the young men of today would say it was "too hot" for me.

One day I accompanied a few of the half breeds to get some wild cherries, and was so absorbed in my getting that I did not notice all had left me. Where they had gone, the direction, I had no means of knowing, and getting to the brow of the hill I saw what I considered their trail, but I soon discovered that it was where a buffalo had wallowed through the marshy ground and soon my horse was up to his belly and to lighten the load I dismounted and mired my way until I reached good footing. Where I was I knew not, and the prospect of wandering through the night was not a

pleasant one, but away in the distance I discovered a horseman, whether friendly or not I could not judge, but galloping along the base of the hill I soon came upon the right trail and found myself in camp. I learned from this never to be alone thereafter.

At length, having had my fill of buffalo hunting, with Jack and the two half breeds, we were on our way back to Selkirk, and it seemed wonderful to me that the Indians, without any compass, and apparently without anything to guide them, for there were no roads, no timber, nothing apparently to guide them, could go 500 miles and come out to the point for which they were aiming.

On reaching St. Vincent I found my party, who had decided to await my return, where, remaining but a few days, we started on our return trip, for we were anxious to get news, having had no letters for weeks.

Chapter X



AMONG the letters sent home
I find the following:

"Fort Abercrombie,

"August 29, 1862.

"I wrote you a long letter from St. Joseph and another from Georgetown, but I fear these did not reach you as the Indians captured the mail coach. Am sorry as these gave a detailed account of my trip of nearly seven hundred miles across the prairie back to St. Joseph.

"Rejoining my party at Selkirk on the 18th of August, we arrived in Georgetown Friday morning, and bidding our friends good-bye on the 25th, we started on our way to civilization, little realizing what was before us, and all our conversation was on what was happening at home and how soon we would be welcomed by them.

"Our first day's ride brought us to a shanty occupied by a Mr. Livingston and family. We reached there about seven in the evening. We had picketed

our horses, eaten our supper and were sitting around the fire discussing the probability of meeting hostile Indians on our way home, when two horsemen rode up at full gallop. They informed us that the Sioux had made their appearance at Fort Ridgley, had attacked the Fort, but had been driven off, that they had killed all the settlers between that point and Yellow Medicine, a distance of sixty miles; that in other places they had killed all the settlers, and all of one company of soldiers but 23; had attacked and killed all the settlers at New Ulm, and had made their appearance about twelve miles from Fort Abercrombie, and it was supposed there were between three and four thousand in the neighborhood of Fort Abercrombie.

“Just imagine what we had to decide on the moment—push on to the Fort or return to Fort Gary and make our way to the coast to catch a steamer for Boston, New York, or perhaps England.

“But, believing that all such rumors were much exaggerated, we made ready to start for the Fort, taking the Livingston family along with us. There were seven on horseback, and three in the wagon besides Mrs. Livingston and child.

“We followed the main road to within ten miles of the Fort, then turned off and camped, if you can call it camping, about two miles from the road, having ridden fifty miles in the dark. Not a wink of sleep, with lariats in hand, ready to mount at a moment’s notice. We reached the Fort in safety, our little party with fifty-six shots being quite an addition to the fighting force.

“The last night I slept in Georgetown I slept about an hour, and the night on the prairie was passed without a wink. Tuesday night I was up all night, and on Wednesday night I amused myself standing guard. Thursday at work on fortifications.

“The Fort is nothing but a collection of log houses, and one hewn log house used for barracks. The houses, though strongly built, afford no protection in case of attack, in consequence of their being so far apart.”

“Monday, September 1st.

“When I put this writing aside I hardly thought I should be put in a predicament where I might never be able to finish it.

“I made a little rough sketch of what was called Fort Abercrombie. I criticised so severely, giving my opinion that it could not be defended an hour if attacked by a large body of Indians, that the Captain in charge said, ‘You seem to find a deal of fault; suppose you attempt to fortify it.’ I said that I would undertake the job if he would detail thirty men to help me. He detailed the men and I at once went to work.

“About gun shot from a building built of hewn timber, fire and bullet proof,

with two entrances, there had been piled, for winter use, cord wood enough to last the winter out. This was piled parallel to the Fort and thus was a fine barricade for the Indians to get behind and blaze away at anyone in the open. About half a mile away was a storehouse, filled with bags of corn, oats and meal. We took the cord wood and made a breastwork about twelve feet high all around this fire proof building, with a bastion on each corner. Then we brought all the supplies from the warehouse and placed the bags inside and next to the cordwood, some six feet high, as a stepping place for the men to fire over the breastwork, a beam having been placed above, raised a few inches to allow for firing without exposing the head. In the wagons which had arrived we found a large number of pitchforks and these were distributed along the breastwork, for repelling boarders.

“There was no water inside and we

soon dug a well, which would answer not only for drinking but for fire purposes.

"After all this was done we felt safe for anything that might happen, and I can assure you that I received a great many compliments for my foresight and for putting the Fort in such fighting condition.

"Saturday morning seven of us, four on horseback and three in two wagons, started from the Fort to go thirty seven miles to bring in some property belonging to a family which had fled to the Fort for protection. The family consisted of a woman and two sons, one a lad and the other a young child. The mother, noticing some Indians outside of her house, asked her eldest son, a lad about twenty-one years old, to invite the Indians to come in and take dinner. They shot him dead in the doorway. The mother hid the young child in a barrel. The Indians entered the house and left her for dead.

Some scouts brought the mother and the child to the Fort.

“Well, we started out. When about ten miles out, the horsemen, with the exception of myself, about one eighth of a mile in advance, and the teams some three hundred feet apart. Just as we were rounding a bend in the river, we heard a shot, and on looking back saw the driver of one of the teams fall, and on looking toward the river, saw perhaps sixty Indians coming from the woods which skirted the river. I had carelessly left my gun in the team, alongside which I was riding. My mule was an obstinate fellow, and on hearing the shot came to a standstill and I could not budge him. I dismounted, reached for my gun, and my mule left me, and I was alone on the prairie, the driver of that team having been killed. The other team had turned and started for the Fort. The horsemen coming to my rescue, tried to catch my mule, but the bullets were flying thick

and fast and I was obliged to run about half a mile to the other team, the horse-men covering my retreat. Just as I reached the team, the lead mules were shot. Luckily it was the lead mules, for if it had been one of the pole mules we might never have reached the Fort. The mules were cut loose, and on we went. Four bullets entered the wagon after I reached it and one of the men was wounded.

“When we got back to the Fort we found the garrison much alarmed. One of the horsemen had left us as soon as the fight began and reported that three or four, if not all, were killed, myself among the number, as he had seen me off my mule and the Indians after me. This makes the second time that I have been reported killed, once when I was out hunting, some traders brought in a fresh scalp, which they supposed had been taken from my head, but I am still in possession of my scalp.

“We got back to the Fort safely, with the loss of one man and seven mules, and had eaten our dinner, when the order came to work on the fortifications. We had been at work about an hour when the alarm sounded. We immediately rushed to arms, since a large body of Indians had made their appearance on the prairie and were driving off our cattle. The cattle are turned out in the morning and brought in during the afternoon. Driving them away by the Indians was the coolest operation I ever witnessed. Right before our eyes they drove them off, and only about 75 Indians at that. They took some 200 head of cattle and about 100 horses. The Captain of this Fort is the biggest coward I ever saw. A few soldiers with one Howitzer might have saved the entire lot, but the big coward would not allow a gun to be fired. Oh! how mad we were to see the cattle driven off and the Captain refusing permission to rescue them.

"Shortly after this the Indians attacked us, and in a style peculiar to themselves. Imagine 200 or 300 of them jumping in every direction, not for a moment keeping still, jumping and lying flat, crawling on their hands and knees, and firing all the time. You can form some idea of this kind of fighting. It is almost impossible to hit one of them for they are continually on the move. At this time they drove back our men and had set fire to one of the haystacks and some old stables and succeeded in driving off a few of the horses, mine among the number, but they paid the penalty for their bravery for our men charged on them and soon drove them back with a considerable loss."

Comment.

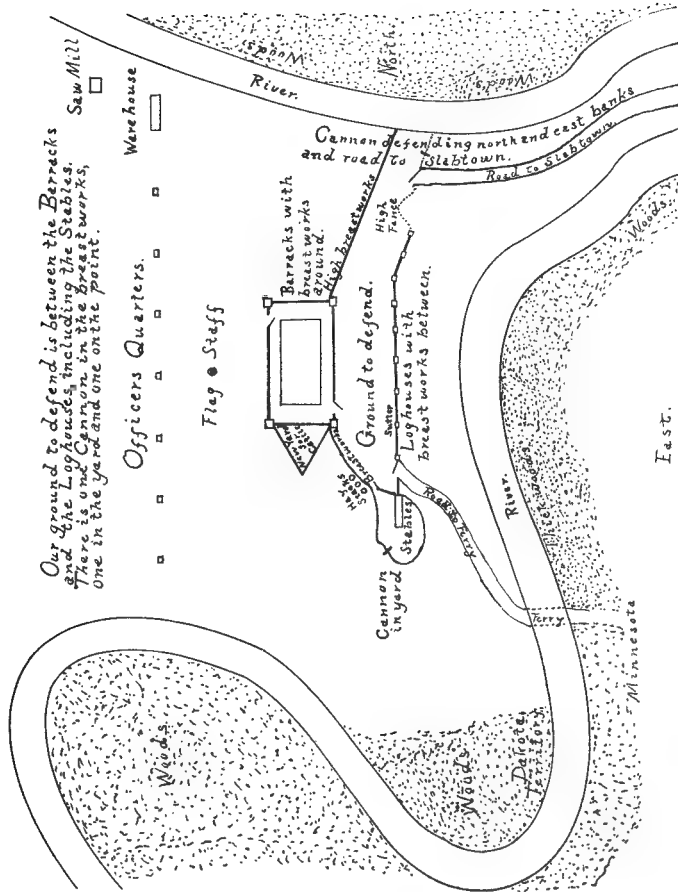
Hundreds of times since I left Fort Abercrombie I have thought about how it happened that seven of us left the Fort to go 37 miles to drive in some cattle belonging to the family the Scouts had

brought into the Fort. It was not surprising that I volunteered, for I knew nothing about Indian warfare, but some of the party had lived on the frontier and knew all about Indians, and here we were starting out, to be gone several days, to get some cattle we did not need, and this in the face of our knowing of the massacre at New Ulm and having learned the Indians had burned a settlement some twelve miles from the Fort. I cannot imagine how we happened to go on this foolhardy expedition.

Our escape was little less than a miracle. Had the Indians waited five minutes before attacking us, they would have been between us and the Fort and we could not have gotten back, but they were after me and they lost their opportunity of heading us off.

West.

Prairie



Chapter XI



NOTHER letter.

"September 9th.

"The most severe attack we had was a few days ago, when we estimated the number of Indians to be seven hundred. The fight began in the morning and continued until evening. One of the barns was burned and a number of the horses were run off, mine among the rest.

"I omitted to say that the morning we reached the Fort, a train of fifty-three wagons, filled with annuity goods for the Indians, dropped in. They had a lot of Springfield rifles intended for the Indians, and some 50,000 caps, for this was before the day of breech loaders. And we later found that we were sadly in need of the rifles, for many of the people who fled to the Fort for safety were not provided with guns.

"The women of the Fort were kept busy for days making cartridges. We had two small howitzers and during the

fight just alluded to, while the Indians were in the stables, the Lieutenant of the regulars and I hauled the loaded howitzer to the barn door, and on it being opened by others, we let go, and as it was loaded with large nails, it made quite a havoc, as the Indians were but a few feet off. Many were killed by the discharge and several wounded. The soldiers finished them with bayonets. We then rushed back, for the Indians were trying to cut us off. We were tired enough I can assure you, when the sun went down. After this hard day's work, I was on guard from twelve until six."

Another letter, September 9th.

"Since I last wrote, we have finished a breastwork of cord wood, twelve feet high, all around the barracks, placing bags of oats and corn, covered with tent cloth, on the inside as a step.

"We propose to hold the saw mill and stables as long as we can, and then,

in case of overwhelming numbers, to retreat to the barracks, where it is fight or die. We think now we can resist an attack of two thousand Indians, for we have built bastions and the howitzers can sweep the camp on all sides. We have been looking for reinforcements every day, but they come not.

"We have sent messengers to the States three times, but have heard nothing from them. We have been expecting an attack every day, and at last it came, and it was a tough one. The Indians fought long and well, but they were met by determined men.

"This time they left their hiding places and rushed upon a few of us stationed in the stables, and three times they went back with a less number. This fight lasted from five in the morning until twelve. I was in the midst of it most of the time by the side of the brave Lieutenant and the soldiers.

"The Indians lost many in killed and

wounded, but as they carry off all such, we have no means of knowing their loss, but blood was afterward seen on all sides. They numbered perhaps four hundred, and the attack was made on all sides, with howls and yells such as only an Indian can make."

Another letter states:

"It has been quiet here until two or three days ago, when a party of six went across the river, crossing on the ferry boat. They had gotten perhaps twenty feet up the bank on the opposite side, when the Indians, who had been lying in wait, fired upon them, killing one instantly, all in plain sight of many of us; and then, for the first time, I saw a white man scalped. The rest of the party came back in all shapes. One went headlong from his horse into the river, and his horse after him. Another was thrown from his horse onto the ferry boat. But they got back safely, some by swimming and some by the boat, we covering their

retreat as best we could, with the exception of one killed and another whom we heard galloping through the woods. This one appeared in about an hour, having gone some miles up the stream, crossing and coming back on the other side of the river."

Chapter XII



OME idea of the hardships of Indian fighting can be gathered from other letters, from which I quote:

“It is now about five weeks since I arrived here, and but one messenger has arrived from St. Cloud. We know not why we are thus cut off from communication with the civilized world. Twelve messengers have been sent out and they could hardly be spared. For four weeks the citizens and soldiers have been expecting reinforcements, but none have arrived. Perhaps our messengers have been cut off, and perhaps reinforcements have been on the way and have been obliged to turn back. All are nearly worn out. Our men are on guard nearly every night, and then compelled to work or fight during the day.

“Fortunately for me I was appointed orderly sergeant, thus being relieved from guard duty, but this did not give me a long sleep any night. Since I have

been here I have had but three nights of good sound sleep. None of us could have endured what we have, had it not been for the excitement. Indians are seen nearly every day and no one dares leave the Fort. Some are on guard during the day while others work, and at night all the men are on guard, two in a place, listening. This tells on the men. Whereas nearly all, when they came here, were strong, tough men who could stand anything, they now move slowly, their faces and anxious looks showing what they have suffered. Many times during the day do we see their faces turned toward the ferry, if perchance they can see the looked-for reinforcements. But the men are determined and will fight to the end.

“It seemed strange to me that the Fort should have been so weak in its defence. When we first came here there were no breastworks at all, and had one hundred Indians attacked the Fort then, it would have fallen an easy prey to

them. Why, had not the citizens arrived when they did, one hundred Indians could have annihilated the place, and then what would have become of us, left on the prairie. We would have been cut off.

“But I stand it well. I am dressed in Uncle Sam’s clothing, eating his rations and drawing one fifty per day. I like it first rate, but would like to see my good folks at home.

“Before I came here I had a deal of sympathy for the Indian, but my mind is changed in regard to them. When I see them, as I have with my own eyes, killing and horribly mutilating women and children, who have always treated them with the greatest of kindness, I can have pity for them no longer. And it is hardly to be credited that white men could join the Indians in such cruelties, but we read about such in the Revolutionary War, and at Fort Ridgley, in this Indian War, two white men were found fight-

ing with Indians. They were disguised as Indians. Let us hope they have been captured and forced to fight or be tortured. And I think if we had captured an Indian alive he would go to the top of the flag staff in no time.

“I had hoped to be in St. Paul before this, but instead have enlisted in a Minnesota regiment, ready to fight Indians, and with little prospect of getting away at present. Although the boys at home enlisted, I bet I have been in more fights than they have, and against bigger odds too.”

Chapter XIII



UT I said I was going to say something about the hardships of fighting the Indians, and here it is:

It was the hardest, the most thrilling and the most dangerous of all my experiences. And this I quote from a letter written in civilization after the danger was past, and of date October 14th.

To escort messengers sent with the mail, twenty-three of us, citizens, under my command, volunteered to cross the river and escort the messengers through the woods, some two miles. I interviewed the Captain, one Van Der Hork, and asked for soldiers to accompany us. Three Indians had been seen a short time previous. We finally refused to go unless we could have some of the soldiers to accompany us, and after much talk he was prevailed upon to let us have ten of his men. These ten he had previously said he would send to guard the ferry boat, which was within easy gun shot of

the Fort. So we had the ten soldiers and twenty-three citizens, all under my command. And these ten was a larger number of soldiers than had ever been out of the Fort before. And further, the Captain said he would send reinforcements if we were attacked.

Well, we started without a commissioned officer. This is no reflection on the officers, since some of them would gladly have gone but they were under the Captain's orders. Well, we crossed the ferry, we escorted the messengers, all of them being on horseback. We accompanied them a little over two miles, bid them good-bye and started on our return trip to the Fort, when we saw three Indians. Supposing they were the three we had seen before starting out, we put for them, when on all sides the Indians came in view and commenced firing. On three sides of us were woods, and from these the Indians came pouring out, and some appeared on the prairie, in fact

completely surrounding us.

We looked for promised reinforcements, but they did not come. We fought them for about two hours, and we realized that we were not to get the assistance promised and that unless we made a break for the woods we would be picked off one by one.

Just then one of the soldiers dropped, and then one of the settlers, Wright, a fine young fellow, a graduate of Williams College, fell right at my side, speaking his last words, sending his love to his mother, to me.

This determined us to make a break for the Fort, for we had lost three killed and seven wounded, but these not seriously, all but one being able to drag themselves to the Fort, the other being carried on the back of one of the citizens.

As we entered the woods, three of us being in advance, I looked back, stopping that we might be all together, stopping just in time to see an Indian be-

hind a tree leveling his gun on me. I dropped, and I heard the bullet whiz past me. The Indians had only shot guns, as this was before the day of repeating rifles, and we found it possible to drop in time to dodge a bullet from a shot gun, if we could see the flash. We went through the woods without further attack, for the Sioux Indians are prairie fighters and we were as good in the woods as they were.

When we reached the ferry, which Van Der Hork had promised to guard awaiting our return, we found that the promised guards had been ordered back to the fortifications and that the ferry boat was on the other side of the river. Mad! I guess we were. We learned that many of the citizens were anxious to go to our assistance as soon as they heard the firing, but the Captain, with revolver in hand, threatened to shoot the first man who left the Fort. Do you wonder that some of our men threatened and

tried to shoot him? Guns were leveled on him several times, but the Quartermaster interfered and his life was spared.

But, to make matters worse, when we reached the ferry we found that the boat was on the opposite side of the river, where the brave Captain had ordered it, presumably because he thought the Indians would clean us out and use the boat to attack the Fort. And it was one of our men who swam the river and ferried the boat across, although plenty from the Fort had offered to take the boat across. Fortunately for the Captain, reinforcements arrived that very afternoon, or he would have been put in the guard house by force. This was the most thrilling experience of my whole trip.

A short time after we reached the Fort, we saw three horsemen galloping toward us on the opposite side of the river from that where we encountered the Indians. They proved to be the mes-

sengers whom we had sent out some time previous, one of them being our guide, Gervais, and surprised enough he was to find that I was alive, for he it was who had informed people in Minneapolis that I had been killed. And these messengers had had a terrible experience on their way to civilization. They were attacked by the Indians, one of them being killed. Gervais' horse was shot, but he escaped, and for three days crawled on his hands and knees to keep out of sight. He told me that on arriving in Minneapolis he asked at the Nicollet House if there was anyone there who knew Lyman B. Goff of Pawtucket, R. I., and a Mr. Chester Holmes, whom I knew as a conductor on the railroad, said he knew such a person. "Well," Gervais said, "telegraph his father that he has been killed by the Indians."

But, as I said, the three horsemen galloped to the Fort and gave us the cheerful news that reinforcements to the num-

ber of four hundred and fifty were on the way just around the bend. They had crossed the river ten miles below, at a crossing known as Bentley's. How unfortunate for us that they had not kept on the east side to make the other crossing opposite the Fort, for in this case they would have heard the firing and their horsemen would have been in the midst of the fight.

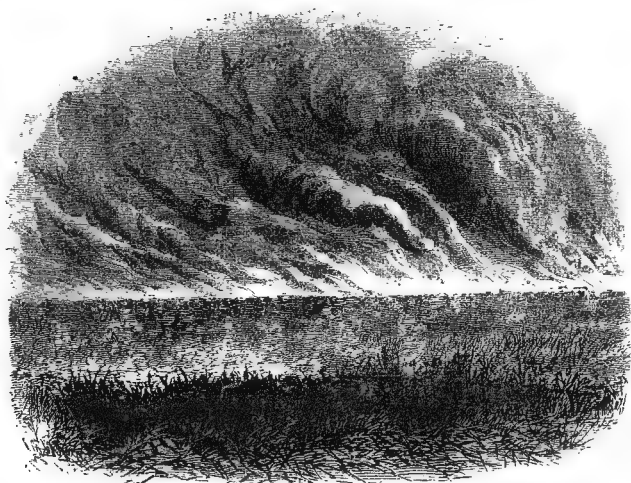
The Captain immediately put on his good clothes and made ready to receive them. He endeavored to get us, the citizens corps, inside the fortified area, so that his company could alone receive them, but it didn't work, for we had gotten our blood up, and I rallied my men, marched them out, and took the right of the line, much to the chagrin of the Captain.

Of course his previous actions soon became known to all the newcomers, and one and all they ignored him. The next day he gave up his command. The rea-

son assigned was, as stated in a St. Paul paper, that he had received a severe wound in his shoulder which rendered him unfit for service. One would suppose on reading the article that he had been wounded while valiantly leading his forces to battle, but the facts are these.

He went beyond the guards one night, got frightened at some little noise, and started back, so frightened that he forgot to give the countersign, and consequently got shot in the arm. Instead of being severely wounded in the shoulder, one buckshot entered his forearm, doing him no injury to speak of. He ran all around the camp shouting, "I am shot; some citizen has shot me." But it turned out that it was one of his own men. When he gave up his command he was able to carry a sword in that hand without any difficulty.

The meeting of the reinforcements was an affecting sight. Everyone in the



The above illustration needs no description. It speaks for itself, and it was just such a sight as I witnessed from Fort Abercrombie late one night. The direction of the wind and marshy ground prevented the fire from working in our direction.

The days of such fires are past, the entire country now being covered with farms, and there is no tall dried grass for the fire to feed upon.

Fort had been keyed up for weeks, and now the strain was off, there was a relapse.

Chapter XIV



FIVE days after the reinforcements two hundred of us started for St. Paul, although the Fort was attacked three times in five days.

With the reinforcements, most of whom were paroled prisoners, there was a company of Chippeway Indians, and it was amusing to see how quickly the Sioux disappeared when the Chippeways gave their War Whoop and started after them.

Of course we expected to be attacked on our way to St. Paul, but we had taken every precaution to guard the women and children. Nearly all were in wagons, protected on the sides by thick boards, thick enough to prevent bullets from piercing the sides. We certainly were a formidable party, as every wagon bristled with guns, in the hands of good Indian fighters. A few of us were on horseback.

At the last attack while in the Fort.

the Indians captured fifty or more horses, mine among the rest, a great loss to me, as I was in hopes to take him home with me; and thus on the return I made use of a borrowed animal.

I rode in advance, with the scouts, and the prairie gave evidence of Indians, as the tall grass showed distinct trails of the passage of human beings, both on foot and on horse. And buildings that we passed were shortly after to be seen in flames.

We camped one night in the Alexandria woods. I was officer of the guard. I had stationed the pickets, two in a place, in pits some distance from the camp, which we had made similar to the encampments made by the half breeds when on their hunting trips.

I was sitting in my tent toward morning, listening to the stories of some Chippeway Indians who had lived in civilization for seventeen years, and who had been on a visit to their old tribe. They

To Whom it may concern

That may certify that
 Mr. Thomas D. Hoff of Rhode Island was present during
 the siege of Fort Abercrombie by the paper bands of Sioux
 Indians during the months of August and September A.D. 1862.
 The Fort was besieged by about eight hundred and fifty
 Indians, the Garrison consisting of about one hundred effective
 men including soldiers and citizens in the absence of fortification
 all the men were kept upon duty night and day, express and
 express were impossible excepting occasionally a messenger
 upon the arrival of reinforcements after a few weeks siege the
 women and children to the number of eighty were placed in
 train in my charge and taken across the Plains to Saint
 Cloud a distance of one hundred and twenty miles
 during the day and air transit to St. Cloud. Mr. Hoff was an
 acting member of the Citizens Corps and the latter part of the time
 was orderly Sergeant and Clerk. his position brought him in
 close connection with my duties and can best say that whether
 in the laborious occupation of building fortifications or under the
 rattling fire of the Indians he bore himself manfully discharging
 his duties becoming to a soldier and gentleman

Fort Abercrombie S.D.
 June 14th 1863

Respectfully
 Your Obedt Servt
 T. D. Hoff Capt. 42nd Me
 of M. S. A.
 Comd. of Citizens Corps

told of coming upon a family of Sioux, all of whom they killed, even to the cat, and the manner in which they related it was enough to convince one that even seventeen years of civilization could not effect a change in the Indian blood. Mark Twain had it about right—"the only good Indian is a dead one."

Toward morning some of the guards came to my tent and reported that signals had been seen at different points, flashes, like flashes of powder. The Chippeways said the signals were evidently made by Indians, who were signalling preparatory to an attack on all sides, for the signals after a little seemed to come from all points. The guards and pickets were doubled, but the night passed without any further signs of Indians.

We arrived in St. Cloud on Sunday morning, having made the trip in five and one-half days, days full of anxiety I can assure you. When about fifty

miles from St. Cloud we met a messenger who had been dispatched by General Pope, who had been put in command of that district, with instructions to let no man leave Fort Abercrombie until further reinforcements reached there, but he was too late.

While on the last day out from St. Cloud, my orderly asked permission to ride ahead and have some of his lady friends get up a good supper for a few of us. On his joining us later in the day, he told me that he had met my father and a Mr. Holmes, who were coming out to meet us. Anxious to see if they would recognize me in my uniform, with my hair and beard three months old, I got aboard one of the wagons alongside the driver. Soon I saw them coming in a buggy, my father driving. I saw his eyes scanning every man as he passed, and his eye fell on me, and then passed on to the next. He didn't know me and I didn't suppose he would. But we soon

got acquainted.

At St. Cloud we had a good supper and a long dance in the evening. For some three months, and until arriving at Fort Abercrombie, I had not seen a white woman, and they certainly did look good to me.

On arriving at St. Paul I dined with General Pope and a few other officers. Putting on the clothes which I left at St. Paul, took the steamer for La Crosse and home.

I was enlisted in the United States Army by a United States regular army officer, and to this day have never been mustered out.

The trip home was an uneventful one and on reaching there was welcomed by my many friends, who but a short time before had been told of my death.

I did not know until later, when I read an account in *Harper's*, how the Indian War of 1862 commenced; the siege of Fort Ridgely and the massacre at New Ulm, when from Fort Abercrombie on the Red River to Mankato, they carried the torch and the hatchet, and I then learned that not less than a thousand men, women and children were indiscriminately murdered and tortured to death, and barbarities of the most hellish magnitude committed. As the writer says, "Massacre itself had been mercy if it could have purchased exemption from the revolting circumstances with which it was accomplished; nothing which the brutal thirst and wanton cruelty of these savages could work upon their helpless victims was omitted from the catalogue of their crime."

And I shudder at what might have been our lot had not the attack at Ridgely and New Ulm delayed the attack on Fort Abercrombie until we arrived at the Fort. It was this delay and my insist-

ence upon the necessity of building a stockade, that prevented the massacre of the entire number who had fled to the Fort for protection, for without the stockade the ground was entirely open, affording no shelter whatever from the fire of the Indians, who could have surrounded the entire so-called Fort and picked off the men, women and children, one by one, and it was only a few days after the completion of the stockade when the Indians made their appearance at the Fort.

